

Historic, Archive Document

Do not assume content reflects current scientific knowledge, policies, or practices.

F76Pn

U.S. DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE. FOREST SERVICE

Present needs in national and state
forestry. 1927.

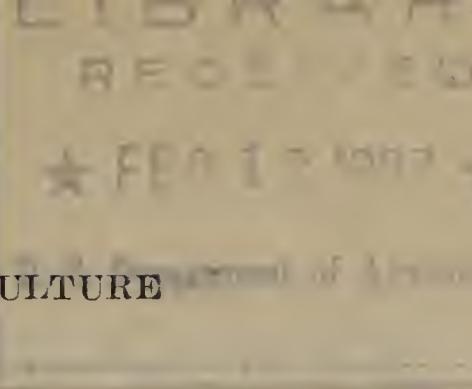
LIBRARY
OF THE
UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Class 1

Book F 76 Pn

8-1577

6 Pm



U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
FOREST SERVICE

PRESENT NEEDS IN NATIONAL AND STATE FORESTRY

By WILLIAM B. GREELEY

Forester, United States Forest Service

FOREST-LAND OWNERSHIP

Unstable forest-land ownership is to-day the greatest single obstacle to the rapid spread of timber growing throughout the country. It is represented by the land speculator, or the lumber company which intends to dispose of its holdings when cut over, or the State without a policy of permanent forestry for its timberlands, or the State, county, or town which is anxious to have tax-reverted lands chiefly valuable for timber growing put back on the assessor's rolls. If all or most of the 470,000,000 acres of forest land in the continental United States—close to one-fourth the entire land area—were in the hands of owners whose future returns rested on actual use of the land, the Nation's forest problem would be much nearer solution.

There would still be necessary, of course, extensive research in timber growing and in the best ways to use forest products—just as extensive agricultural research is necessary in the interest of better farming. Many riddles now perplex and hold back the forest owner, which research must solve. There would be necessary a large educational work to make known the best practices and get them accepted. There would be necessary public facilitation of timber growing through measures to lessen the risk of fires and taxes greater than this form of land use can bear. These are all essentials of an adequate public program of forestry. But so long as those who own forest land are not interested in making or keeping it usable for timber growing, a fundamental obstacle remains.

The ownership of the forest land in the continental United States is in round numbers as follows:

	Acres
Federal Government -----	89,000,000
States -----	10,500,000
Municipalities and counties -----	700,000
Private owners, large -----	220,000,000
Private owners, small -----	150,000,000

From the standpoint of stability, the holdings of municipalities, small private owners, and the Federal Government rate relatively high. State holdings vary from highly stabilized to wholly unstable. Large private holdings are in the main unstable, but with strong evidence of a trend toward greater stability. This trend constitutes the most significant feature of the present forest situation in the United States.

NEED FOR MORE PUBLIC OWNERSHIP

Eventually stable public ownership and management of not less than one-third of our forest land will probably be found wise. The Federal Government now owns one-fifth, most of which is under permanent administration as national forests and national parks. Existing laws look to some enlargement of this area. In part it will come about through adding lands from the open public domain. In part private lands will be acquired. An enlarged plan for the acquisition of national forests through purchase was adopted by Congress in 1924. In addition to completing the purchases contemplated by the Weeks law of 1911 for protecting the watersheds of important navigable streams, it will enable the Government to aid in the restoration of denuded regions where idle land now constitutes a serious public and economic problem. When the present laws have been fully carried out, however, they will not very greatly increase the proportion of Federal ownership.

It is not advisable to purchase additional Federal holdings where local needs can be met by State or municipal forests or by the extension of farm and industrial forestry. State and municipal forest holdings are now far fewer and smaller than is desirable if not imperative in order to bring our forest-land ownership as a whole into reasonable stability. Since municipal (town and county) forests are not likely to contribute a large aggregate to the total of publicly owned forests, it is to the extension of State forests that the main immediate effort should be directed.

STATE POLICIES OF FOREST-LAND OWNERSHIP

Most of the States are far behind the Federal Government in the adoption of permanent forest land ownership and management policies. Of the State-owned forest lands a little more than 5,500,000 acres, or 63 per cent, is under administration for public purposes, while nearly 5,000,000 acres more are either subject to private acquisition or being held without final determination of policy. Yet the States moved before the Federal Government to inaugurate public forest ownership.

In 1872 New York created a commission to consider State ownership of "the wild lands lying northward of the Mohawk, or so much thereof as may be expedient"; and the beginnings of the present Adirondack and Catskill forest preserves date from 1885. In 1876 Colorado became a State; its constitutional convention memorialized Congress asking for the transfer of the public timberlands in the Territory to the care and custody of the State, and its constitution provided that the general assembly should enact laws to preserve the forests upon the State's lands, or upon public domain lands placed under its control. California created a State board of forestry in 1885, which urged in its first report that all Government and State timberlands not fit for agriculture be permanently reserved and the cutting of timber placed in the hands of national or State forestry officers; and the legislature in 1888 passed a concurrent resolution praying Congress to stop the disposal of all Government lands in California with a view to their permanent preservation as a forest reserve for the protection of the watersheds of the State.



Other forms of State forestry legislation and activities began still earlier. Laws aimed at the control of forest fires had their historical antecedents in colonial times. Michigan and Wisconsin both inaugurated inquiries on their State forest conditions and needs in 1867. In 1869 the Maine Board of Agriculture appointed a committee to report on a forest policy for the State and three years later a law "for the encouragement of the growth of trees" exempted from taxation for 20 years lands planted to trees. Laws offering tree planters either bounties or tax exemption were passed between 1868 and 1872 in Connecticut, New York, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Iowa, Missouri, Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas, and Nevada—all before the first Federal timber culture act. Forestry bureaus or commissions were inaugurated in a number of States in the eighties. These are examples merely.

It was the Federal act of 1891 authorizing the President to create forest reserves, the act of 1897 providing for the administration of these forests, their rapid upbuilding under President Roosevelt, and the inauguration in 1911 of the policy of land purchase to add to their number that has placed the Nation so far ahead of the States in permanent forest-land ownership and management. Coincidently other forms of Federal activity in forestry have been greatly enlarged. Public attention has been centered on forest conservation as primarily a national problem, to a degree which has tended to place unduly in the background the concurrent need for more localized action and the nature of the immediate interest of each community, commonwealth, and region in permanent forest resources.

At the present time the policies of the various States with regard to forest-land ownership show the widest divergence. New York has over 2,000,000 acres (17 per cent of its forest land area) in State forests and parks, and is gradually adding more lands through purchase. It began withholding from sale tax-defaulted lands in the Adirondacks 43 years ago and in consequence had even at that time a nucleus of 600,000 acres toward the forest preserve. Pennsylvania has over 1,000,000 acres in State forests and parks and is contemplating extensive further purchases, likely to lead ultimately to State ownership of approximately 40 per cent of its forest-land area. All three of the Lake States have large State forests, but none of them has adopted a clear-cut policy for holding tax-defaulted lands or timberlands received through Federal grants and consistently blocking them up into suitable administration units. Several of the far Western States have obtained or are now acquiring such units through exchanges of their scattered school lands within the national forests for solid blocks of timberland, and have in view permanent retention and management of these lands. All told, 29 States have either State forests or State parks, or both; but as yet only 8 States have as much as 100,000 acres so reserved, and 15 have less than 10,000 acres each.

State activities in forestry have, with a few notable exceptions, developed with other ends primarily in view than the administration of public forest properties. Usually State foresters have at first been appointed to serve as agencies of information, education, and advice to private owners. When administrative functions were added they generally concerned the organization and maintenance of State systems of protection against fire. Through the enactment

of the Weeks law in 1911, providing for Federal cooperation with the States for this purpose, the protective work was greatly stimulated and enlarged. But the time has come for the States to grapple in earnest with that part of their problem which can only be met through public forest ownership.

The purchase policy of the Federal Government does not contemplate removal from the States of this duty of public forest management. It is intended to be cooperative in spirit and method; to seek common counsel with the States, and a correlation of Federal and State acquisition activities under a general program advancing all interests concerned. The public interests in forestry must be taken care of not as primarily a Federal matter, nor as primarily a State matter, but through a working partnership.

The States have obtained their present forest lands partly through Federal grant, partly through tax default, partly through purchase and gift. A formidable obstacle to putting all their present holdings and additional lands reverting through tax default under permanent administration is the scattered location of a large part of these lands. In some States constitutional provisions also stand in the way. A further obstacle is the frequent lack of an administrative agency adequately organized and equipped to assure the consistent carrying out of a farsighted policy of land purchase and management. These obstacles must be overcome. The States, which began a half century and more ago to take thought for the preservation of their forest resources, should press forward to early assumption of their full responsibilities for forest-land ownership and management.

FOREST POLICIES OF LARGE PRIVATE OWNERS

Economic conditions are tending to replace unstable private ownership of forest lands with stable. Public policies can hasten or retard the change.

A great deal of the present instability of ownership is due to special conditions which make it impracticable for particular individuals to handle their forest properties as permanent investments. Obligations must be met, going operations carried forward, the capacity of established plants utilized, plans that have been entered upon put through, though this means stripping from the land all that can be manufactured and leaving it bare of forest capital other than the very smallest growth. Unquestionably also privately owned timberlands do not always afford sufficient prospects of financial return under permanent management to constitute a promising investment, at least under present conditions. The hazards arising from inadequate protection from fire or taxation systems ill adapted to timber culture are not infrequently genuine deterrents. On the other hand, failure to appreciate the economic trend of timber supply and timber values is often the reason why commercial timber growing is not undertaken on a much broader scale. To break down this obstacle is primarily a task of education and demonstration—in a broad sense, of salesmanship.

Not so long ago nearly all large private holdings of forest land were in unstable ownership, in the sense that the proprietors did not contemplate permanent retention of title. The changing attitude of the forest industries and timberland owners in this matter is very

significant. The point of view of many lumbermen has been that they were engaged in an essential industry—the manufacture of lumber—which necessitated timberland ownership as the source of supply of raw material; that their business was utilizing timber, not growing it; and that what might happen to the land after they were done with it did not concern them. That they should be regarded as destroyers instead of producers of wealth seemed to them a distorted, unfair, and monstrous idea. But what happens to the land is certainly of public concern. Open-minded lumbermen are coming to see that if they accept in good faith the idea of self-government in industry they must not ignore a public responsibility created by land ownership. While that is not a responsibility to engage in the business of timber growing as a permanent commitment against their will, nor a responsibility to sink money in unsound ventures, it does impose an obligation to weigh carefully, as business men, the methods of forestry; and that the lumbermen are increasingly ready to do.

In the South particularly an evolution appears to be taking place both in the attitude of timberland owners and in the actual woods practice that is of very great import. Conditions in the South are peculiarly favorable to industrial timber growing; that is, to large-scale forest management designed to supply the needs for raw material of associated permanent industries. Classing with the South the border States of Maryland, West Virginia, Kentucky, and Missouri, this group of 16 States contains 48 per cent of the forest land in the entire country. Three-eighths of their total area is forest land. Relatively little of this will make agricultural land. Because of the rapid growth of timber in these States, the certainty of large markets relatively near or easily reached, and other advantages, the opportunities for good returns on capital engaging in this form of enterprise seem exceptionally promising. The development of timber growing as a permanent land usage is fundamental to the future prosperity of the region and hardly less important to the country at large.

Southern pine constitutes 70 per cent of the present lumber output of the region, and it is on the southern-pine land that the early introduction of timber growing is most urgent. If cut over without provision for obtaining regrowth and then left unprotected and uncared for, the pine lands decline in productive possibilities. The southern-pine forests also support the great naval-stores industry of the South and provide material for a growing pulp and paper industry. Together, the lumber, naval stores, and pulp and paper industries of the South reported in 1923 products valued at more than \$760,000,000. All three industries are turning toward forestry as a means of providing for their future requirements. Nevertheless, to imagine that economic trends and private initiative will of themselves take care of the situation would be a serious mistake.

The South is decidedly behind any other part of the country in public provision for forestry, in public realization of its importance, and in the thought and customs of the rural population with regard to fire. Forest lands under public administration comprise all told less than 2 per cent of the forest area of the 16 States. This small fraction is made up of 3,291,000 acres of national forests, chiefly in Arkansas and the Appalachian Mountains, 61,000 acres of State forests and State parks; and some 83,000 acres of municipal and county

forests. Less than one-fourth of the total forest area is receiving any degree of public protection against fire, and the combined expenditures of the States, the counties, private owners, and the Federal Government for protection are only about one-tenth the estimated cost of adequate protection. Thus public aid in timber growing is of the most meager character.

The task required to make the South safe for forestry is very great. Stable ownership of private holdings based on continuous use of the land can be largely accelerated through public action. The most important educational need is not merely to show timberland owners what they might do if they would, how to do it, what it would cost, and what returns an investment in timber growing might yield, highly important though this is; the people generally must be brought to realize what forestry requires of them, collectively and individually. Forest fires in the South are to a much larger degree than in any other part of the country deliberately caused, not the result of indifference or carelessness. They are the consequence of a deeply ingrained custom of woods burning. Traditionally, from the time of settlement, in most of the South livestock production has depended upon free range, and with the belief that fire improves the grazing the small farmers have been in the habit of burning the range—that is, the woods—annually. Thus there is an apparent conflict of interest between the local population and large timberland owners who wish to obtain reforestation. Laws, as well as local custom and individual practices and habits, are involved. If the South is not to see almost one-half its land area failing to contribute adequately to the support of population and the maintenance of prosperity, the States must individually and vigorously develop the policies and create and support the organizations needed to protect their interests.

This holds true not merely for the South. A review of the salient facts for each forest region would make clear that with few exceptions the States have as yet not assumed the part which belongs to them. The spread of industrial timber growing as a permanent use of the 220,000,000 acres of land in the United States now in large private holdings depends to a very large extent on what the individual States do in promotion of their own interests in the matter.

A PROGRAM OF ACTION

A few years ago it was a moot question whether a sound public policy of forestry did not require the immediate adoption of measures to regulate forest utilization on private lands. That something needed to be done to substitute timber growing for destructive exploitation was widely recognized. Legislation was proposed looking to regulation by Federal authority. An alternative plan was also proposed for State regulation, to be stimulated by limiting Federal aid in fire protection to States which should adopt and apply adequate regulatory measures. After prolonged deliberation, Congress chose neither course but laid down, in the Clarke-McNary law, a Federal policy of liberal aid to States in fire protection and the promotion of farm forestry and of enlarged national forests. The law made provision also for a study of the problem of forest taxation, generally regarded by large timberland owners and lumbermen as

one of the most serious deterrents to stable ownership and industrial forestry. Thus was definitely laid down a course which relies on voluntary individual action under public inducements and assistance along cooperative lines as the most practical means for advancing private forestry.

Educational work to induce forest landowners generally to take up timber growing where this is the best form of land use, research to discover the best practices and clear the path of removable obstacles, a continued and widened campaign to lessen the evil of forest fires, and general enlightenment on the facts basic to sound State policies of forestry, constitute the most important immediate public need. To meet this need calls for carefully coordinated effort by all available agencies in a sustained drive under a common program. Forestry is both a national and a local problem, but even the national problem requires for its successful working out a localized as well as general attack. Each State must have a flourishing forestry movement of its own, based primarily on its individual needs and directed to the realization of a program adequate to its specific situation. The ultimate objective is to bring under permanent beneficial use for forest purposes all of the forest land in the country on which stable management has not begun.

PROGRESS IN STATE FORESTRY LEGISLATION

Although comparatively few of the State legislatures held sessions last year, a considerable advance was made in State forestry legislation. Mississippi created a State forestry commission with authority to appoint a State forester. Virginia created a commission on conservation and development, with power, under approval of the Governor, to take over all of the State's forestry activities; and Louisiana enlarged her general forestry governing board to include a representative of those interested primarily in State parks.

New York made available a \$5,000,000 bond issue that had been approved by popular vote in November, 1924, for buying more land within the forest-preserve counties, and also included in the conservation fund over \$30,000 for the acquisition of nonagricultural areas outside of these counties, to be used, among other purposes, for demonstrating forest management. Massachusetts authorized additional forest-tree nurseries. Louisiana appropriated \$1,000 to buy land for a State nursery or other forestry purposes, and also required that an average of two seed trees per acre for every 10-acre plot shall be left standing and unbled when timber is cut or turpentined. Mississippi sought the encouragement of landowners to leave one seed tree per acre; and also authorized private contributions to a State forestry fund with provision that 90 per cent of the amounts so received must be spent on the land of those contributing and as they direct for reforestation and protection purposes so long as in harmony with the reforestation practices of the United States Forest Service.

The same act authorized the acceptance of gifts of land up to 2 per cent of the area of any county for State forests, and gave consent to acquisition by the United States, through purchase or gift, or up to 25,000 acres for national forests. New Jersey increased from 2 to 10 cents per acre the amount of tax paid annually by the

State to municipalities on account of State forests; and also passed a joint resolution indorsing the program of the department of conservation and development for the acquisition of not less than 200,000 acres of wild lands for State forests, and authorized an expenditure of \$250,000 for the purpose whenever made available through inclusion in an annual appropriation act.

New Jersey, Virginia, and Kentucky strengthened their laws for the control of forest fires, and Mississippi vested her State forester with broad powers for their prevention and control.

New York enacted a new yield tax law which partly follows the lines of the three earlier acts that it supersedes, and partly follows the lines of the Massachusetts forest taxation law. Kentucky provided for classifying as forest reserves privately owned tracts containing not less than 1,000 acres each and devoted to the growing of trees, which thereafter, as long as they remain so classified, are to be taxed on a valuation of not over \$2.50 per acre. The taxes when collected are paid into the State treasury to the credit of a forest-reserve fund. In addition a 10-per cent stumpage or yield tax is imposed when timber is cut, one-half to go to the State and one-half to the county, to be distributed in the same manner as other taxes. As an offset for loss of current revenues from forest reserves, the counties receive a reduction of the amount due the State under the general tax laws, equal to the ad valorem tax annually assessed by the State upon such properties.

In California, Minnesota, and Louisiana important constitutional amendments designed to place the taxation of growing forests on a more satisfactory basis were adopted at the general elections in November; and in Wisconsin a proposed amendment for a like purpose, which was adopted by the legislature in 1925, will come for approval before the legislature elected last fall. If so approved it will be voted upon by the people at the next election.

The above summing up of recent legislation by the States shows advance all along the line. This is especially marked in the strong trend toward giving reforestation a dominant emphasis in the efforts to reduce fires and in attention to the tax problem. With legislative emphasis plainly laid upon these three vital points it can not be doubted that the States are making real progress. Their most conspicuous need is for more liberal support of their forestry departments. If in addition their forestry programs are made to include in suitable degree the building up of State forests and of well-devised administrative organizations for handling the difficult tasks involved, a tremendous gain will have been achieved.

ADDITIONAL COPIES

OF THIS PUBLICATION MAY BE PROCURED FROM
THE SUPERINTENDENT OF DOCUMENTS
GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE
WASHINGTON, D. C.

AT

5 CENTS PER COPY



Forest Service
U.S.D.A. needs in
Present forestry.

1
F76Pn

JULY 19 1936
AUG 27 1932
JULY 22 1932
BOSTON MASS.
\$5.50

